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DEPARTMENT FOR D(L), SRAP, SCA/FO, SCA/A, EUR/RPM

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SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY LEW'S APRIL 2, 2009 MEETING WITH
AFGHAN INTERIOR MINISTER ATMAR

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Christopher W. Dell for Reasons
1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On April 2, Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Jacob Lew, D (L), met with Afghan Interior (MOI) Minister Hanif Atmar. Atmar provided an account of the April 1 Ankara trilateral summit with Pakistan and Turkey. He said the presidential level talks were positive, but the exchange was marred by Pakistani Generals Kayani and Pasha who were rude to the Turks and disrespectful of their own president. Atmar made a major pitch for continued U.S. support for his Major Crimes Task Force (MCTF) to battle corruption and for rapid expansion of the Afghan National Police (ANP), beginning with a 4.8 thousand increase in Kabul City as envisioned in a Kabul Security Plan. He also argued for increases in the ANP elsewhere, especially in the South as U.S. forces are deployed there. Atmar also reported briefly on his discussions with the French on European gendarmerie trainers for the ANP. D (L) Lew made it clear that the U.S. strongly backed these goals, but there were significant questions in the Strategic Review about how to pay for the programs. There were issues to work through between the U.S. and other partners regarding sharing responsibility for funding and training. The Washington inter-agency is reconsidering additional resources, and the U.S. was working with partners to encourage additional assistance from allies. End Summary.

AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN AND TURKEY TRIPARTITE TALKS

¶2. (C) The Deputy Secretary had met Atmar briefly at the March 31 Conference on Afghanistan at The Hague. Atmar explained that he had not returned directly to Kabul, but went to Ankara, Turkey for the April 1 trilateral summit with Pakistani and Turkish officials. At the level of presidents, he reported, the meetings were "positive, constructive, from the heart." However, at the level of Pakistani General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, Chief of the Army, and General Alhmed Shuja Pasha, ISI Intelligence Chief, the encounters were tense. Kayani and Pasha 's body language was disrespectful of their own president, and they were rude to the Turks as well, asking them "Don,t you think we can talk with our neighbors directly?" Atmar said that Turkey and Afghanistan would press forward, but the key lesson learned was the need to keep backing Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and help him with his own military. D (L) Lew responded that clearly big political decisions have to be made by Pakistan. In meetings at The Hague, it appeared that the attacks in Lahore had struck a nerve. Perhaps opportunities would come from that concern. Atmar noted that in Kandahar, five suicide bombers had been detected and eliminated in two hours, whereas in Lahore they had gotten through.

THE MAJOR CRIMES TASK FORCE AND BATTLING CORRUPTION

¶3. (C) Turning to Afghanistan, D (L) Lew said the U.S. admired Atmar,s work against corruption, and on recruitment and training of the Afghan National Police (ANP). The U.S is aware that Atmar,s objective is a much larger ANP, and sees the need for more police. Atmar, picking up first on the

reference to corruption, asked whether the U.S. was happy with President Karzai's commitments to fighting corruption in his speech at The Hague, a section which Atmar said that he (Atmar) wrote. D (L) Lew said the remarks were welcome. Atmar continued that he was trying to establish a Major Crimes Task Force (MCTF) at MOI with its main focus the fight against corruption, especially at the mid and senior levels of the Afghan government. It would have authority to investigate governors, chiefs of police, anyone. Investigating cabinet members would require special permission, but below that MOI could move on investigations and prosecution. The MCTF was being built from scratch, and focus initially on house cleaning at the MOI and in the ANP. It would not necessarily begin with corruption in aid projects, but with corrupt officials and those involved in narcotics. Atmar said that SRAP Holbrooke had spoken with him about people he should investigate. His response had been "give me evidence and I will investigate, but the process could not be driven by rumors." Atmar said the MCTF would be "Afghanistan's FBI."

¶4. (C) D (L) Lew said that the core principle must be that no one is above the law, not even high profile personalities. Atmar agreed that was the point, but even with political support, the MOI does not yet have the capacity without a more fully developed MCTF. "Who will do the investigations," he asked rhetorically. "Not the current police." Atmar said that he had a partnership with the FBI, but would be coming to D (L) Lew for further help to build a highly powered unit that would end Afghanistan's excuse for not moving against corruption that it lacked the means to do so. D (L) Lew said that the response had to reach across the whole U.S. government. If the FBI was the place to go for

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resources, it would be figured out who could provide the correct assets. Atmar said that he had met with FBI Director Mueller, who in principle agreed to help. FBI agents in Kabul were already assisting and 100 Afghans had been selected for possible service on the MCTF. Atmar turned to his American CSTC-A advisor to provide details on what was immediately needed: fulltime polygraph support to vet the Afghan candidates (only 20 had been vetted since November); more FBI agents (one agent concentrates on MOI, but rotates out every four months now); and funding to take over a compound for MCTF offices that the DEA had outgrown. D (L) Lew said he would return to Washington to talk about these requests. Rooting out corruption is at the heart of building a governance structure and, if the key is resources, we need to figure out who has them, and who pays, across the U.S. interagency.

¶5. (C) Atmar said that he also wanted to raise the MCTF in the context of President Obama's intention to forge a new Contact Group for Afghanistan and Pakistan. This would provide counterparts for the U.S. to urge to tackle and support these problems together. D (L) Lew said that was what the U.S. had asked for, and we were now in the midst of transition from announcement of the Strategic Review results to implementation. The U.S. would not put off Afghanistan, but convey what it could or could not do. We cannot just talk about turning the corner on corruption, but the devil was in the details. SRAP Holbrooke would work on this matter too, and he was a person who commanded attention on issues.

¶6. (C) Atmar said that he looked forward to early decisions and knew that progress would depend on knowledge, wisdom, and hard work. In addition to fighting corruption, Afghanistan's priorities were: expansion of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF); counter-narcotics; and Afghan-Pakistani relations, especially how to get Pakistan to focus on them. He said that he was confident that a new chapter had started on Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, that Afghanistan was open to reciprocity and that there were no serious impediments to progress.

ANP EXPANSION

¶7. (C) Atmar then opened a pitch on expansion of the ANP. He said that he could not run a risk of terror attacks on a vulnerable Kabul and had proposed a Kabul Security plan. The

international community had reviewed the situation and all concluded that the low number -- not to mention quality -- of police in Kabul was up to the job. The agreement was that 4.8 thousand more Kabul police were immediately needed and, in fact, he was moving ahead with recruitment and training. The entry of new Coalition forces in the South and East of Afghanistan would likely result in fleeing insurgents to focus on Kabul, so he urged that decisions on specifics for expansion on the ANP be made. It was acceptable, he said, to start with small expansions before the elections for Kabul and key provinces. When USAID Task Force Director for Afghanistan and Pakistan Director James Bever asked whether that included Kandahar, Atmar confirmed it did, noting that as the U.S. deployed more troops to the South, the ANP was severely understaffed, without sufficient police to be mentored or to partner with the incoming troops. He reviewed a map showing where the ANP was deployed and high areas of conflict.

18. (C) D (L) Lew said that training and mentoring were a central part of the effort in Afghanistan, the key to all. The Army (ANA) was progressing, but the police were more of a challenge. The U.S. had tried to persuade the Europeans, who have experience with gendarmerie, to join in so that the training and mentoring is not exclusively left to the U.S. Afghanistan has to decide on what it needs. Atmar said that had already been done, &We know what we want,8 and that was more Aghan Uniformed Police (AUP) as well as gendarmerie. At the moment, the majority of ANP are in security, as opposed to law enforcement roles. Therefore, if tomorrow the additional U.S. forces to the South bring trainers, the ANP is too busy fighting to get the training. ANP are part of the counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy of "Shape, Clear, Hold, Build" and being asked to "Hold" cleared districts. But the insurgents return and therefore, Atmar said, he has had to switch to military-style deployments for the ANP.

19. (C) D (L) Lew asked whether it would help if the ANA were able to fulfill those tasks. Atmar responded that, calculating from accepted COIN ratios of security forces to population, the ANA also needed a significant increase in size so they could cover the high conflict areas. The ANP could then concentrate on its job of addressing the nexus between terrorists and narcotics, which is a law enforcement matter. For these reasons, he was asking for both decisions on defense numbers as well as on help for a police size surge in Kabul and the South. D (L) Lew said there had been significant discussions of how to finance such support. He said the U.S. has to work internally and with partners, which hopefully would result in less of a burden being carried by

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the U.S. There were numerous bilaterals with partners in The Hague on a coordinated approach.

FRANCE GENDARMERIE OFFER

110. (C) Atmar noted that he had talked with the French foreign minister at The Hague conference about gendarmerie training and France seemed serious about burden-sharing, and about trying to lead other European countries to assist the ANP. He said he also was working to promote burden-sharing as it would be unfair to use only the U.S. army to train the Afghan police. He suggested that if France, Turkey and the others actually could put together a gendarmerie training force, perhaps they could be integrated into the CSTC-A training program. D(L) Lew said that the EU had taken up the matter and that questions of EU-NATO "theology" were involved. The U.S. was interested in getting the job done, and not theology.

111. (C) Finally, Atmar said that he had worked well with American experts in Kabul on all issues, including counter-narcotics. He said that he needed the State-Department of Defense partnership and expressed the hope that the Strategic Review would not reduce that engagement. D (L) Lew said that the Strategic Review will focus more resources, but that the balance will shift. Security will shrink as a percentage of the total as there is to be a concentration on agriculture and alternate livelihood programs, with the goal of attacking narcotics production.

¶12. (U) Participants: In addition to Minister Atmar and the Deputy Secretary, the meeting was attended by Charge d'Affaires Ambassador Frank Ricciardone, DCM Dell, USAID Task Force for Afghanistan and Pakistan Director James Bever, POLMIL Counselor Bob Clarke, State official Piper Campbell, and COL Steve Lynch, CSTC-A Advisor to the Minister.

¶13. (U) This cable has been cleared by Deputy Secretary Lew.
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